

Jet

BOOKS

Defending James Earl Ray To See Justice Done, Investigator Tells JET

"In defending James Earl Ray and insisting that he get a new trial, I am not asking that the killer of one of this nation's greatest leaders go free; what I'm trying to do is uphold the traditions of the laws of this country," says Harold Weisberg. A onetime government investigator, Weisberg feels that on March 10, 1969, in a Memphis, Tenn., courtroom, the curtain rose on one of the most brazen travesties of justice ever to disgrace America.

James Earl Ray, the accused killer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was scheduled to go on trial. But there was no trial. Ray pleaded guilty in exchange for a 99-year sentence in prison. Ray did not agree, he said, with U. S. Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, who insisted there was no conspiracy.

In his book, *Frame-Up*, for which he was recently awarded a citation by New York's Media Workshop, headed by Atty. Florynce Kennedy, Weisberg does not raise doubt that Ray was implicated in the King assassination. But his thesis is that Ray filled the same role Lee Harvey Oswald did in the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Tex. In Weisberg's view, Ray, like Oswald, was not the killer; he was the decoy, the patsy, the man meant to be caught.

"I believe that Ray did not know

that he was involved in a conspiracy to kill the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.," Weisberg told JET, "although he must have known that he was involved in some kind of criminal activity. He should also know who at least was involved in the conspiracy with him." Weisberg suggests the possibility of another conspiracy, one by the U. S. Justice Dept. to prevent Ray from having an open trial where the entire facts of the case would be brought into the open.

There is the question of how Ray, alone and unaided, a stranger in Canada, managed to come up with aliases that were the real names of three living men who looked much like him, in one case even to a similar scar on the face. There is the mystery of his free-spending, cross-continental Canadian-Mexican spree, and of how a penny-ante escaped convict like Ray came by so much money. There is the business of the phony police broadcast on the night of the assassination, graphically describing a gun battle with a fleeing car, which led police north out of Memphis and away from the assassin's escape route.

"This country must be set on the right track so that it could be possible for a man with moral leadership to survive," Weisberg opines. "It seems that whenever people like a Malcolm X, John F. Kennedy, his brother, Robert F. Kennedy, and Martin Luther King Jr. seemed to reach a unity of purpose on the reordering of our national priorities or a reassess-

Sues Utility Firm For Bias; Asks Rate Hike Halt

A group representing Black employees of the Detroit Edison Co. filed a suit in federal court charging Edison and two unions with racial discrimination in hiring, promotion and seniority arrangements. The group asked the Detroit Public Service Commission to deny Edison's rate increase request.

ment of our role abroad, there seems to be a conspiracy to stop this kind of idealism."

Weisberg is not suggesting where the heart of the conspiracy lies; he feels that he has already endangered Ray's chance for a full and long life and the pursuit of happiness, and to say more at this time would even diminish those chances further. Even the recent attempt by Ray to escape from Brushy Mountain State Prison in Tennessee was motivated by a wish to survive, Weisberg feels.

Atty. Florynce Kennedy presents award to lawyer-author Weisberg.

